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ABSTRACT

Although teachers usually refer to it in other terms, career-related learning is already widespread in primary schools in the United Kingdom. Teachers readily recognize that, even without any adult interventions, children constantly assemble impressions of work and that it is important to broaden primary school pupils' horizons and experiences of the world of work, and thereby help them extend their future career choices. Most teachers in primary schools are not familiar with the Qualifications and Curriculum Authorities' careers-work documents. Furthermore, the nonstatutory framework for personal, social, and health education and citizenship does not include the explicit support for career-related learning that primary teachers need. However, schools find the framework of career learning theory readily recognizable and useable as a practical blueprint for helping children develop their career-related learning. The framework details outcomes, points needing attention, and curriculum opportunities at the following stages of learning: sensing; sifting; focusing; and understanding. Primary teachers providing career-related learning have the following range of five partners to call upon: careers services; secondary schools; parents; governors; and the wider community. In addition, an extensive portfolio of development materials has been tested with teachers and published as a framework for developing career-related learning in primary and middle schools. (MN)

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Exploring Career-Related Learning in Primary Schools

This Briefing was produced with support from: The Boots Company; the Department for Education and Employment; Esso; the University of London Institute of Education; Lambeth Education-Business Partnership; Merseyside Training and Enterprise Council; and News International.

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Children's impressions of the working world, and of the roles they may occupy, are formed at an early age. Career learning can extend and challenge what may be narrow and restrictive constructs. In order to do so, it has to begin earlier than current secondary-school programmes.

This Briefing:

- reviews current practice in career-related learning in primary schools;
- establishes a rationale for such work;
- suggests a framework for implementing the work;
- offers recommendations for developing the work.

The Briefing is based on development work undertaken by Bill Law and Barbara McGowan, both NICEC Fellows. It has been written by Barbara McGowan.

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CURRENT PRACTICE

Career-related learning is already widespread in primary schools (although teachers do not usually refer to it in these terms):

- Primary-school teachers pay a great deal of attention to life-relevant learning – a significant element of this is recognisable as career-relevant learning.
- Particularly important in this context are programmes which seek to build pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem, and activities related to work roles in the local community.
- Teachers use a wide range of teaching and learning methods which are particularly well-suited to career learning – including story-telling and role-playing.
- Many primary schools appoint a teacher to co-ordinate life-relevant aspects of learning; a few appoint a co-ordinator for careers work.
- Most primary schools 'map themes' across the curriculum; some include career-related learning as one of these.
- Learning webs are a particularly useful tool in planning career-related learning, although many primary schools successfully deliver the work through a subject-based curriculum.
- Where teachers seek to introduce 'relevance' into their programmes of study, career learning is strengthened through the utilisation of work-related contexts.
- There is a direct relationship between the scope and effectiveness of career-related work, and the emphasis schools put on developing working partnerships with the wider community – with parents, business partners, and in some instances the careers service.
- There is little evidence of coherent, planned progression in career-related work, although primary schools recognise its value when it is discussed.

Alfred Mizen School, Surrey

'We always start from where the children are; they come from very narrow backgrounds, with little experience of the world around them. We need to build their experience so that they see possibilities, develop skills, understand themselves and their capabilities, and appreciate what they can achieve. Our work is about helping children to know themselves, and make them aware that there is a choice about what they do, and how they do it.

'For us "careers" is about finding the career-related learning in our usual class teaching; staff find it amazing what they can get out of topics. We utilise existing school and community resources; we make visits out and have people in. We have lots of role-play about people the children have contact with.'

RATIONALE

Teachers readily recognise that, even without any adult interventions, children constantly assemble impressions of work. A lot of children's play anticipates working life: they act out work roles and practise work-related skills. Their attitudes to the world outside school are also being formed through:

- the impact of the media;
- the views and values of the people at home and around them.

In these ways, children's constructs about work, the working world and their role in it are developed; the foundations are laid for their later learning. Some of the early learning is clearly a good foundation – 'I'm going to play with a computer when I go to work'. But much reflects a young mind in the making – 'I'm going to have a band when I grow up' – and can include constructs that might be difficult to challenge later – 'Nobody in our house goes to work'.

Teachers feel it is important to loosen 'fixed' thinking. Broadening children's horizons and experiences of the world of work can support the development of rich and positive constructs about work: thinking that will enable and extend future choice.

Within three years of leaving primary school, children will be asked to make decisions about GCSEs and GNVQs. The decisions they make will be influenced by what they think they already know about themselves, about work and about the job roles available to them: decisions that will influence their subsequent life chances. Leaving all this to secondary schools relies too much on too little, too late.

Windsor County Primary School, Toxteth

'This is an area of high unemployment; there are whole families here who have been unemployed for a long time. We want to make sure that our children see the world of work as there for them: we want them to know they can be part of it – in most cases they will not get this from home.

'We seek to give children broader horizons by introducing them to as many experiences and role models as possible; we want to show them that education is part of the process of getting somewhere. All this activity enables children to recognise what local employment there is – we are dropping seeds.

'We know we are succeeding when we have children at age eleven who are still ambitious. They can say "it *does* matter ... if I do maths ... get high grades ... achieve something here". That is our achievement.'

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CURRICULUM FRAMEWORKS

QCA FRAMEWORKS

Most teachers in primary schools are not familiar with Qualifications and Curriculum Authority careers-work documents, including *Looking Forward* (SCAA, 1995). This identified three aims which were exemplified for key stages 1 and 2, as well as 3 and 4. It was the clearest public statement to date that the work needs to begin in primary schools.

Learning from Careers Education and Guidance (QCA, 1999) restates these aims, saying that pupils should be able to:

- understand themselves and develop their capabilities (self-development);
- investigate careers and opportunities (career exploration);
- implement career plans (career management).

Teachers from primary schools believe they do much to lay the foundations of such work, particularly in the area of self-development. They also engage children in activities that grow broader concepts of work; and they build foundation learning in 'career management' through pupils' target-setting, monitoring and review of their own work.

A recognisable starting point for all teachers is pupil learning about people at work, and pupils' own roles. This works across the range of curriculum contexts in which this learning takes place.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION (PSHE) AND CITIZENSHIP

The non-statutory framework for PSHE and citizenship at key stages 1 and 2 becomes part of the revised National Curriculum in September 2000. Much in the framework *implicitly* supports career-related learning. However, primary teachers need a considerable understanding of such learning in order to structure PSHE and citizenship programmes of study to include it.

Little in the framework *explicitly* supports career-related learning. Statements in the area of self-development are linked to it, but primary teachers may not recognise their career potential. For example, within self-esteem, career-related learning can make a stronger connection with the ability to plan for and manage a rewarding future.

St Philomena's Roman Catholic Junior School, Liverpool

'We involve partners in work with children: parents work alongside teachers, and a group of sixth-form BTEC drama students did a production. It was a moral story and the children discussed it – why did he lose his job? wouldn't it have been better if he had done this instead? it isn't fair! All were impressed by the depth of questions from young children.

'If our children can talk to other people, we know they are doing well; children recently surprised the inspector in a local reading survey by their confidence and ability to explain what they were finding out. If we can help them to know it is OK to take a risk, get the answers wrong, have an opinion, we are succeeding in helping them build for their future.'

NATIONAL CURRICULUM PROGRAMMES OF STUDY

Schools also link career-related learning into the National Curriculum programmes of study. These are acknowledged as accessible locations for developing and managing career-related learning in primary and middle schools.

A NOTE ON VOCABULARY

- 'Work-related teaching and learning' and 'personal and social education' – both recognisable in primary schools – are good descriptors of aspects of this work; but by themselves do not reflect sufficiently focused and progressive development for this learning.
- 'Careers work' or 'careers education and guidance' all too easily imply that the work involves asking children what they want to do when they grow up.
- 'Career-related learning' has similar problems, but at least implies that it is removed from the mainstream of careers work and is focused on related learning.

Arnot County Primary School, Liverpool

The school has appointed a teacher as a Careers Co-ordinator, who is doing a Diploma in Careers Education and Guidance.

'I was intrigued to be offered this opportunity – it is a gap in primary schools, but a challenge! Some staff were cynical, but they now see that it is too late leaving it to secondary schools to develop the skills pupils need for career choice.

'I teach a "careers course" with my year 5, and I do a "job swap" once a week to teach a class in year 6. We help pupils to look at "what they want, what they can offer, what they are ready to put in, what they value and how they prioritise". But not about work; we help them to apply this kind of thinking to school. They are developing a sense of who they are, what their role is, what other people's roles are, and what the expectations are of them. This work fits easily into the National Curriculum – speaking and listening skills (English), problem solving (design & technology), evaluating (history) and more. This is no detriment to committed time.'

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PROGRESSION

Schools find the framework of career learning theory* readily recognisable and useable as a practical blueprint for helping children to develop their career-related learning. The four stages reflect pupils' progress. Each builds on the other, until young people reach the stage of being able to make effective decisions.

This progression is not key-stage-related, but there is a reasonable expectation that children in key stages 1 and 2 will be more concerned with sensing and sifting; and young people in key stages 3 and 4 more engaged with focusing and understanding. The final two columns record some teachers' comments on using the framework.

Stages	*Outcomes* *Pupils will be able to...*	*Points needing attention*	*Curriculum opportunities*
Sensing Children look at people in the working world, and find out what adults think and feel about it. This is a stage of building impressions: they notice what goes on, who does what. They have a great deal of this experience before they get to school – *children begin to get a sense of what the world of work is like.*	...say what is done by whom; what they use; where they do it; how they feel about it ...say what happens in sequence; maybe identify turning points	Children lack work-related experience; this is re-inforced if no-one at home works Children do not see the world of work as inclusive of them	*English*: people who work in our school *Geography*: work in the neighbourhood; visit to the local shopping precinct *Circle time*: sharing experiences of mum at work
Sifting Children start to find patterns, make comparisons and link things together that are similar or different. This leads to the formation of concepts and classifications: e.g. when they say 'at work some people look after children...' – and, more questionably, '... that's women's work' – *children begin to sort it out.*	...sort out how things change, through time and in different settings ...begin to use concepts like 'qualification', 'profile', 'outdoor work', etc.	Some children beginning to grasp basic concepts here, but most need practice	*Science*: comparing objects, linking things and events *English*: comparing classroom and work settings *History*: similarities and differences between today and the past
Focusing Each child starts to find out more about what is important to him/herself, which may be different to what other people see and say. They begin to notice the differences between their own and other people's points-of-view. They may first focus on work they know about from home because it is familiar and easier to understand – *children find things that particularly interest them.*	...recognise differences between their own views and those of their family and friends ...know whether and how something is important to them – something they want or value	Often very difficult for children; many don't expect to be heard Reflects work done with parents and carers	*PSHE*: listening, not interrupting; respecting differences *English*: express opinions, discuss with others *Art*: use work on evaluating images from the locality, from the past and present
Understanding Children start to appreciate how actions, their own and other people's, have consequences – they start to recognise causes and effects. This means being able to explain past events and anticipate future ones; it opens doors to seeing 'it doesn't have to be like this, it can be different' – *children begin to understand how things fit together and how this affects them.*	...make sense of how things got to this point ...know how it can work out	Dealing with cause and effect is a skill; it needs constant reinforcement Many children find it hard to accept that their actions have consequences for themselves and others	*PSHE*: links well into existing programmes in social education and preparation for transition to secondary school *History*: discussion about why things happened or changed *Geography*: discussion about how it got like this, and how and why it is changed.

* Law, B. (1996). A career learning theory. In A.G. Watts *et al.*: *Rethinking Careers Education and Guidance: Theory, Policy and Practice*. London: Routledge.

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SUPPORT

This work is not done in isolation: career-related learning has a range of partners to call upon.

CAREERS SERVICES

There is at present limited evidence of active and formal links with the local careers service. However, careers service staff share a common agenda with primary schools regarding:

- tackling underachievement;
- dealing positively with social exclusion;
- working to raise standards.

The priority which careers services can attach to work with primary schools is dependent on the targets to which they are subject.

SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Many primary teachers have structural links with local secondary schools to deal with transition issues at the end of key stage 2. Such work can usually be linked to transition between key stages, and into the world beyond statutory schooling.

Primary-school teachers often do not recognise the work they are doing as career-related, and therefore contributing to careers programmes in secondary schools, until this is pointed out to them.

PARENTS

Parents and carers are a highly influential factor in influencing young people's future career choice; all the teachers consulted saw this group as key partners.

- All the primary schools consulted had well-established ways of working with parents that actively involved them in children's learning.
- There was an appreciation by most teachers that parental perceptions of the future bring both possibilities and limitations into children's future lives, even at this early age: these issues need to be part of the ongoing dialogue between school and home.

GOVERNORS

Governors have a valuable perspective as both 'insiders' and 'outsiders' to the school, and can often bring a network of useful contacts into the school. They are frequently underused as a resource.

THE WIDER COMMUNITY

Most primary and middle schools have active, ongoing links with their local community. Partners from this world beyond school are both a resource, and a stakeholder interest in the future well-being of children currently in school.

There is a need to establish clear roles and tasks for partners. The key to sucessful 'working together' is clear expectations on both sides, grounded in both need and reality.

MATERIALS

A extensive portfolio of development materials were trialled with teachers and those who professionally support them. The materials have been published as *Opening Doors: a Framework for Developing Career-Related Learning in Primary and Middle Schools* (available from CRAC).

This consists of four major sections, corresponding to the four stages of career learning progression, sandwiched between a users' guide and finding and using resources.

- *About this pack:* a users' guide.
- *Taking a look:* what this work is about in primary schools.
- *Thinking about:* an examination of some of the basic concepts behind careers work to see how they apply to primary schools.
- *Identifying priorities:* ideas to develop work in individual schools.
- *Securing the foundations:* practical help for curriculum planning for a whole-school approach.
- *Using the resources:* both people and materials.

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Gilmour Junior School, Garston

'We seek to give children opportunities to find out about the world of work, what it is like, what people do, what work might be like for them, what equal opportunity means; we want to give them a chance to develop understanding and know what they can do about it.

'We began by working with the careers service; they approached us and linked with me as the teacher who had most recently been in non-teaching employment. At first we took the children to job sites – factories, the fire station, North-West Water and others. Then these companies came into school to a Careers Fair: this was a chance for parents also to talk with people in work. The careers service helped us to build the contacts; now we have a register of supporting organisations for the school.

'The learning from this is developed in the classroom; for example, we use holiday brochures from the travel agent in maths (prices, distances) and in English (writing, comprehension). We are using the resources of the community to introduce real life into school-based learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

DfEE AND QCA

Effective careers education programmes can support the raising of attainment and increase pupil motivation; it is rightly part of the government's agenda to encourage more young people to remain within education and training to age 18. Career-related learning at key stages 1 and 2 can help all children develop positive constructs about learning and work.

- What is needed is a clear base to make explicit what schools are currently doing implicitly. A useful way forward would be to produce a framework, to enable all primary teachers to recognise the value of this work, to support teachers who are already involved in career-related teaching and learning, and to provide a guide for developing this work within the curriculum.
- Clear references to career-related learning need to be included in the QCA guidance to primary schools, supporting the implementation of the non-statutory framework for PSHE and citizenship at key stages 1 and 2.
- Future QCA materials supporting the development of careers work should include specific sections for key stages 1 and 2, exemplifying the work for primary teachers.

CAREERS SERVICES

Career-related learning in key stages 1 and 2 is even more critical in the light of current changes to the careers services. This early work represents an investment: without strong foundation learning, the opportunities, resources and expertise available at key stages 3 and 4 are less likely to achieve the outcomes intended, being absorbed in remedial teaching and learning rather than in progression.

- Targeted funding needs to be made available for careers advisers to work with primary-school teachers on the development of career-related learning in key stages 1 and 2.

LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITIES

Advisory teachers for careers work have a critical role to play in the development of understanding, value and purpose of this work, the dissemination of good practice, and the provision of resources.

- Local authority advisory staff need to facilitate links between career-related learning in key stages 1 and 2, and CEG programmes in key stages 3 and 4.
- Cross-phase in-service training programmes, including careers advisers, can help to ground the work in the curriculum, and model an integrated learning approach.

SECONDARY-SCHOOL CAREERS CO-ORDINATORS

Careers co-ordinators in secondary schools are often interested in developing programmes of work alongside primary colleagues. A joint approach can offer some starting points for years 7 and 8.

- Careers co-ordinators in secondary schools need to identify what relevant learning children coming into year 7 bring with them. This needs to be the basis for programme planning, to build on what is already there or make good any deficiencies.
- Work in years 7 and 8 can form a bridge between career-related learning in primary school, and the planned careers programme from year 9 onwards.

TEACHER UNIONS

There is an understandable anxiety that teachers should not take on more responsibilities than have already been thrust upon them.

- It is important to recognise that this work is an existing and valued part of teaching and learning in most primary schools: it is not additional work, but the curriculum looked at from another point-of-view.
- Support for this aspect of teaching and learning is a critical contribution to tackling social inclusion at an earlier stage, and enabling the more effective use of limited resources in later stages of careers programmes.

INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING (ITT)

The introductory sections of the National Curriculum documentation state that teaching and learning must prepare pupils for the responsibilities of adult life. Children's early learning influences future life choices and chances: this work is too important to be left on the margins of the curriculum. Incorporating a module into ITT programmes for primary teachers would: raise awareness of the possibilities of the work; increase relevance in curriculum planning and delivery; raise enthusiasm for learning; and extend children's often limited horizons.

Sources

The work reported here was carried out between 1995 and 1999. It comprised:

- Extended *visits* to nine primary schools, to explore with teachers and headteachers the concepts they were working with in relation to career learning, and to find out how they framed their work in this area of learning.
- Development of *materials* and *frameworks* for developing this learning. These were trialled in the original schools and also with a wide range of teachers and others in some 25 related workshops around the country.
- Individual and small-group *consultations* on the rationale and materials with teachers, headteachers, governors, careers advisers, secondary careers co-ordinators, advisory teachers in local education authorities, education-business partnership managers, colleagues working in primary-school development in university departments of education, and a range of community partners who work with primary schools.

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